

Executive Summary: Recidivism Analysis Report

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The Accountability Court Recidivism Analysis Report provides a descriptive summary of Georgia's accountability court data between 2013 and 2020. This project mirrors the 2016 recidivism study but is far more comprehensive with improved data quality, twice the participants (20,500), and an extended tracking period (3-years). The statewide and per court reports describe recidivism but do not compare recidivism rates between participants and non-participants.

It is important to note that admission statistics may under-count actual participation enrollments. During the six years since implementation, courts relied on different data collection platforms until the implementation of Integrated Management Solutions Connexis Cloud & Five Point Solutions ACCM/CaseWorX. These recidivism data only reflect cases where there is a match between Council of Accountability Court Judges (CACJ) data and Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC). This matching requirement may account for any discrepancy for lower enrollments the program administrators collect. Missing records or duplicate participants may explain some differences. Migrating legacy records to new systems always presents data quality issues.

Data Quality

Data quality has significantly improved compared to the 2016 study. Court staff is now regularly entering state identifiers (SIDs), which are needed to match GCIC criminal history records. This study matched 95% of the available SIDs to GCIC data. Additionally, the courts improved data quality for the current offense, termination status, and date of discharge.

Re-Arrest

The report does not compare recidivism rates between individual courts. Inter-county or inter-state comparisons of recidivism rates can be misleading. Offender characteristics (risk) across courts play a role in community norms or prosecutorial standards and court type. Mental health courts may exhibit higher recidivism rates. Family Treatment Court participants may not have criminal histories. Additionally, mature accountability courts with an established treatment infrastructure may accept higher risk and higher need offenders than implementation courts. Formal evaluations with a scientifically established comparison group are the only way to establish scientific program effectiveness.

The overall findings of this study are encouraging. The statewide data show that non-DUI participants look similar (demographics, prior history) to prison admissions. Such results do not imply that all court participants are prison diversions. Still, the data demonstrate that Georgia's accountability courts continue to enroll participants that look similar to prison-bound inmates. This suggests that accountability courts continue to move in the right direction. Program graduates also do far better after graduation than terminated participants for 24 and 36-month intervals. For example, among terminated drug court participants, the study found they had a three-times higher felony re-arrest rate than program graduates after 36-months.